

Mimi and the Big One

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Chapter 1

Kira opened the door to let her grandmother in.

“Grandma!” she exclaimed. Her grandmother leaned down to scoop her up in a hug. Kira wrapped her arms around her grandmother’s shoulders and let her legs swing just above the floor.

“How’s my little Kira?” Grandma Amina asked.

“I’m *gooood*” Kira crooned, sliding down from her grandmother’s arms and running back towards the kitchen. Just then, her brother Bo came sprinting around the corner, rushing up to hug his grandmother like his sister had done. Their father followed close behind.

“Hi Mama,” Kira and Bo’s father said as he came to greet his mother, kissing her on each cheek.

Grandma Amina followed her son into the kitchen, where little Kira and Bo’s mother was laying food out on the table. “Hello Amina,” their mother said. “Shall we eat?”

Grandma Amina nodded, and was led to her seat hand-in-hand by Kira.

The family sat down to eat, Kira and Bo sitting across from their parents, with Grandma Amina at the head of the table.

Excitedly, Bo reached forward across the table to pull the chicken—his favourite dish—towards him, knocking over his glass of water as he did so. “Oops!” Water splashed across the table, seeping between the dishes.

Before his mother could scold him, the cutlery on the table began to vibrate, the spilled water rippling as the table trembled and the house shook. Bo, who was perched on his knees at the edge of his chair, lost balance and slipped to the floor with a clunk. As Bo hit the floor, the shaking abruptly stopped.

“Are you okay, sweetie?” Bo’s mother stuck her head under the table to look at Bo, who was splayed out on the floor. Bo gasped dramatically, putting a hand to his forehead and groaning sarcastically. “I will never be the same!” he said.

His mother rolled her eyes and sat up, followed by Bo as he energetically hopped back up to his chair.

Their mother stood up from the table, pulling out a drawer and tossing a dish towel at Bo, who mopped up his spilled water. She then walked quickly around the kitchen and

unplugged their microwave, toaster, and kettle. The children watched her with a puzzled look on their faces before she disappeared into the rest of the house.

“Papa,” Kira said quietly, a pout on her face and her eyebrows raised in worry. “What was that?” She looked up at the ceiling, then around the kitchen as if double checking the house wasn’t still moving.

“It was an earthquake!” Bo said, almost yelling with excitement.

“Just a small one, my dear,” their father said, reaching across the table to pat Kira’s hand. “No need to worry. We get them all the time, but that one was a bit larger than usual. Now eat up!”

Kira looked at her father, worry still in her eyes. “What’s an earthquake?” she asked.

“Ooh, ooh!” Bo was almost jumping up and down on his seat. “I just learned about them in school! It’s when the technical plates in the earth move around!”

“Tectonic plates, Bo,” his father corrected him. “Yes, the earth has many layers, and sometimes those layers move around because of the pressure under the earth’s surface. An earthquake happens when one tectonic plate goes under or moves against another, causing the earth to shake a bit.”

Their father demonstrated with his fork and knife. He held them side by side, pushing them past each other to show two tectonic plates scraping against each other. Then he turned the cutlery so that the prongs of the fork and the sharp part of the knife faced each other and slipped the knife underneath the fork to show a tectonic plate slip underneath another.

“Yes,” Grandma Amina chimed in. “A lot of earthquakes happen each day, where we live, but we can only feel some of them.”

Bo and Kira’s mother returned, smiling. “All unplugged!” she said, sitting back down.

“Why?” Bo asked.

“Just in case another earthquake comes—sometimes fires can start if something happens to the electricity during the shaking,” his mother replied.

“Another one?!” Kira glanced at her parents, her worry increasing.

Her father smiled at Kira. “Don’t worry,” he said. “Sometimes after an earthquake, something called an ‘aftershock’ happens. They usually only come after big ones—bigger than the one we just had—so I think we’re okay. But Mama unplugged things just to be safe.”

“Think of it like bouncing on a trampoline,” Kira and Bo’s mother said. “If you bounced up, then landed on your bum and didn’t keep bouncing, it would take a couple bounces for you to and stop bouncing. That’s kind of like what an aftershock is; the earth might keep bumping for a bit after the first earthquake.”

There was a slight pause in conversation, and the children’s father leaned forward and put some vegetables on his plate, plopping one in his mouth.

“You know,” Grandma Amina said, “when I was just about your age, I felt a big one.”

Bo gasped. “No way! That’s so cool!”

Kira stared at her grandmother, a large piece of broccoli perched on her fork, halfway to her mouth. “What?!”

“Cool!” Bo nearly shouted.

Grandma Amina smiled and looked at Bo from overtop her spectacles. “It was actually a bit scary, Bo,” she told him.

“Oh, sorry,” Bo looked down at his plate. Grandma Amina patted his hand and smiled. Bo smiled back and scooped up a piece of chicken from his plate, shoving it in his mouth.

Grandma Amina chuckled, then looked at her family around her. They continued to talk about earthquakes, quickly moving from how buildings survive the shaking to how an

earthquake can cause a tsunami—a big wave ocean wave—if the earthquake happens underwater.

Soon dinner was finished, and the children's mother rose from the table, taking her Grandma Amina's plates from the table to place them in the sink. Bo and Kira excitedly did the same, in a clatter of plates and forks.

Their father stood up and began to do the dishes.

"Mama, is there any dessert?" Bo and Kira hopped up and down excitedly in hopes of something sweet.

"Not today sweetheart, I'm sorry," their mother ruffled Bo's hair as he groaned in disappointment.

"We may not have dessert," Grandma Amina said, "but maybe I could tell you the story about when I was a little girl in the earthquake." She looked at her grandchildren eagerly.

Bo rushed over to his grandmother, wrapping his arms around her waist in a hug. "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! Could you?"

He put on his best puppy-dog eyes and Grandma Amina laughed. "Of course!"

The children excitedly cheered, and their parents laughed.

"They love stories!" their father said over the sink, a soapy sponge in one hand and a wet plate in the other.

As their parents cleaned up, Grandma Amina walked her grandkids over to the living room, where they settled down on

the couch. Their parents joined, Bo and Kira's mother handing Grandma Amina a cup of tea before sitting down.

“Well, let's see...” said Grandma Amina, taking a sip of tea. “I was twelve years old and my sister Hanna was thirteen. Everyone called me ‘Mimi’ back then....”



Chapter 2

Hanna and Mimi strolled up to the entrance of the market. Their mother had told them to stop by on their way home from school to pick up bread for a special new dinner recipe she wanted to try. Mimi was glad to pick up the bread

always excited for a trip to the market after school, but the trip had spoiled Hanna's plans of playing soccer with her friends after school.

As they entered, Mimi was hit with a million smells of all the different foods. Some smells were familiar, and some made her nose wrinkle in disgust. She smelled grilling meat as she walked by a butcher, glancing into the back of a stall to see the thick, pink meat before it was thrown on the grill. As she and Hanna walked deeper into the market, she passed a table filled with heaps of colourful spices. She breathed in deeply, inhaling the thick, delicious scents of all the different spices.

Hanna walked ahead as Mimi trailed behind, distracted by all the sights and smells. She looked up at the high market ceiling to see little birds darting between the beams. She spotted a nest high up, nestled into a crevice near the ceiling. She could just make out three little birds wiggling about in their nest, and she smiled.

She walked further towards the bakery stall, where her sister was heading to buy the bread. She watched Hanna stop and shove her way through the busy market to reach the baker.

To her left, Mimi saw a stall overflowing with beautiful bouquets of flowers. She stood in front of it, admiring all the colourful arrangements. She leaned down, picking up a rose.

Mimi examined its petals, tracing her finger around them. They were soft and silky, and she lifted the rose up to her nose, inhaling the sweet scent.

“Mimi!” a voice chimed from behind her.

Mimi turned to face her older sister, Hanna, who had an annoyed look on her face. She glared up at Hanna, who was a good deal taller than her. Hanna’s long, curly dark hair fell across her shoulders and gently trailed behind her as she marched towards Mimi. Hanna held up the bag of bread in her sister’s face, sassily raising her eyebrows.

“Let’s go!” Hanna pulled on Mimi’s shoulder, tugging her by her shirt. “I have things to do.”

Mimi flung her shoulder back, pulling her favourite blue t-shirt out of her sister’s grip and swatted the bread out of her face. “Fine.”

The two sisters began to walk through the market stalls in the direction of home. Mimi admired each stall’s goods as they walked by, sad to be leaving all the pretty flowers and delicious scents of spices and fresh-baked breads so soon. Above them, the birds fluttered from the rafters of the old market building, singing to each other and flying down to beg the bakers for crumbs. As Mimi watched a group of birds flitting around a dropped piece of bread as she walked by, she suddenly got dizzy and lost her balance, quickly catching

herself by placing a hand on a table of fresh-cut vegetables. *Odd*, she thought, slightly disoriented.

In front of her, Hanna suddenly stopped mid-step, turning to her sister. “Mimi?—” Their eyes met, and Hanna was cut off as she was suddenly thrown forward, crashing into a man carrying a box of potatoes. The potatoes went tumbling everywhere. Mimi stepped forward to help her sister but got even more dizzy and had to place a hand on the table nearest her to stop from falling.

Around her, Mimi could hear screams and loud bangs as things fell to the ground from shelves in the market stalls. She struggled to gain her balance—with each step it was like someone was pulling the ground right out from under her. “Hanna what’s happening?!” Mimi screamed. She looked around frantically for her sister.

Hanna was on the ground, struggling to get up amongst the pile of potatoes, which were rolling and bouncing in every direction. She was still grasping the bread bag, which was now squished and deformed from Hanna falling on it.

Mimi looked around her. Market stalls were shaking, the food tumbling off shelves and tables to the floor. Children were screaming and people were pushing to escape. A man shoved her to the side as he ran by towards the market

entrance, and Mimi was sent flying into the vegetables behind her, falling flat across piles of leafy green vegetables.

She caught sight of the market ceiling just then, the birds from the rafters chirping wildly and flying about as a beam crumbled and began to loosen. Mimi realized the old building wouldn't stay standing for much longer.

"Hanna!" Mimi leapt off the vegetables and ran towards her sister as fast as she could in the shaking, kicking potatoes out of her way as she went. Hanna had been knocked down again, slipping on a round potato, and she was cradling her elbow with tears in her eyes. "Hanna it's going to collapse!"

Mimi saw Hanna's eyes look past her to the ceiling, widening in fear. Mimi fought through the shaking and grabbed her sister's arm, and Hanna let out a pained shriek as she extended her elbow.

"Hurry!" Mimi pulled her sister through the market, rushing towards the entrance. Around them, shelves were falling as market stalls collapsed. Mimi heard the building shudder, and suddenly a big shake threw the two sisters to the side. This time, they both landed on a pile of raw fish, Mimi's finger accidentally poking through a fish's eyeball as she braced herself.

Mimi let out a disgusted shriek, tears welling up in her eyes as she frantically wiped off her hands. She hated fish.

Hanna was quick to react and pulled her sister off the fish towards the exit. Mimi whimpered as they quickly made their way around fallen items, trying carefully to avoid tripping on loaves of bread, fruits and vegetables, and collapsed tables. They passed a bakery stall, and Mimi gasped. The oven had been tipped to its side, and coals had spilled out, causing a wooden table nearby to catch fire. Three men were frantically trying to put out the fire amidst the chaos. Her eyes stared at the red flames, and she felt a blast of heat chase them as they escaped past.

Dust showered down on them as the ceiling became more and more unstable.

Slowly, the shaking stopped.

Hanna tugged on Mimi's hand, and they ran together towards the exit. They were being pushed from each side, as the crowd of marketgoers all ran to the exit at once. The sisters held each other's hand tight. They were so close to the exit.

Suddenly, the whole crowd was thrown sideways as the ground shook *hard*. Mimi felt Hanna's hand slip away. "Hanna!!" she screamed.

Mimi frantically looked around, but all she could see were the shoulders of strangers. A loud *crack!* sounded from

behind her, and she whipped her head around just in time to see a large beam fall from the ceiling.

Around her, screams rang out, and she realized she had to run. She squeezed her little body through the crowd, and burst out of the market, sprinting to the middle of the street. She turned to see people pushing out of the small market entrance, and stared in horror as the building slowly began to collapse, the back of the building crashing down as the front slowly leaned to the left.

The shaking stopped again, and Mimi slowly backed away as the building continued to lean. She had never seen a building move like this, and she felt hot tears escape from her eyes. The left exterior wall of the market slowly came to a halt, resting on the building next to it.

Around her, people were gathered in the street. They stood in the middle, with their faces turned up to the buildings around them, watching out for falling signs and light posts. Debris was all over the road, and as Mimi looked around her, she saw buildings leaning the wrong way and walls with big cracks reaching up them. Her lip quivered as she took this all in. A once familiar neighbourhood was now unrecognizable, with dust and debris littering the streets.

Her vision became blurry as she tried to process everything that just had happened. She let out a sob, looking

down at her hands, which were covered in fish guts. She didn't know where Hanna had gone to, or if she had even made it out of the market.

"Hanna?" she screamed, wiping her eyes with her forearm, trying not to get any fish guts in them. "Hanna!"

She whirled around frantically, trying to spot her sister in every direction. People were still pushing their way out of the market, which hadn't yet fully collapsed. As she stared further into it, she saw that the fire from the bakery had grown, spreading quickly from stall to stall in the wooden building. She stared at the flames as they climbed higher, and gasped when she realized the roof would likely catch fire too.

Suddenly, she saw a familiar face in the crowd, pushing her way out of the building. "Hanna!" she screamed, running toward her sister. She was stuck between the frame of the door and the crowd, everyone pushing to get out around her.

"Mimi! Help!" Hanna screamed, reaching her arm out towards her sister, the bread still clutched in her hand.

Mimi ran up and grabbed Hanna's hand, and pulled her around the door frame and into the street. Hanna whimpered in pain as her already injured elbow pressed against the door, and Mimi looked to see she had a big scrape on her arm from being crushed as she was trying to escape. The pair ran down a

side street, getting away from the burning market building as fast as they could.

The sisters kept running and running until they couldn't run anymore. They passed people putting out fires and placing wooden beams up to reinforce homes; they dodged rubble in the road and fought their way through crowds. All the while they held hands, their grip so tight their fingers went white.



Chapter 3

Finally, Hanna stopped, and curled her arm into her chest, again cradling her elbow. In her other hand, she still clutched the bread bag, now squished and deformed.

“It hurts, I can’t,” Hanna whispered hoarsely, looking down at her arm, breathing heavily. Her elbow was swelling up, and Mimi saw it getting blue and purple by the second. A bit of blood dripped down from the scratches covering her arm.

She looked around, and Mimi realized that Hanna had been leading them the way home. In her fright, she hadn’t noticed or cared where they were going—just that they were going away from the market. She turned back to where they had come from, and above the buildings she could see a thick, black cloud of smoke rising from where the market should be.

Mimi looked back at her sister, who had shuffled over and sat down on a big piece of rubble in the street, the

deformed bag of bread at her feet. She was carefully examining her injured elbow.

“Hanna, we need to go home,” Mimi said, walking over to her sister.

Hanna looked up at Mimi, ignoring her injury for a moment. There were tears in her eyes and she looked scared. “That was a big one,” she whispered. Mimi kneeled at her sister’s feet and wrapped her arms around her, placing her head in Hanna’s lap.

“I know,” she agreed. “It was a really big one.”

She gave her big sister one last tight squeeze. “But we really need to go home,” she urged.

“I know, I just have to stop for a second,” Hanna looked down at Mimi from her perch, a hot tear trickling down one cheek. “It hurts.”

Mimi stood up and placed a comforting hand on her big sister’s shoulder.

“What hurts?” a voice said from behind Mimi.

She turned around to see a boy walking towards them, with scruffy brown hair and smudges of dirt across his cheeks. She recognized him; he was in the class a year younger than her at school and lived in their neighbourhood.

“My sister’s elbow,” she told him as he came to stand next to the two sisters, a strange excited look in his eyes.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m helping people,” he told her. He turned to Hanna, who still sat on the piece of rubble, cradling her elbow. “I can help you!”

“Sorry, who are you?” Hanna’s voice was thick with sass, and Mimi could tell she didn’t want to talk to this stranger.

“He’s at my school,” Mimi said.

“I’m Harry,” the boy said. “And I can help!”

“How?” Mimi asked. She looked over at Harry, puzzled.

Harry swiftly pulled the backpack he was carrying off his shoulders and dropped it on the ground, kneeling to dig excitedly through it.

“We don’t need your help!” Hanna’s voice cracked as she furrowed her eyebrows and watched Harry continue to dig through his bag.

“Aha!” Harry exclaimed, pausing his search through his bag and pulling out a small white bin with a red “+” across the side. Mimi had seen one of them before, at school, in the head teacher’s office, and realized it was a small first aid kit.

“Hanna, maybe it’s a good idea,” Mimi looked at her sister, whose lips were pursed. Hanna didn’t like strangers, and

even more so didn't like being helped by people. She always insisted on doing things her way.

Harry looked up at Hanna. "When in trouble, we help one another!" he sang. "That's what my dad says. He taught me to do first aid."

Harry clicked the kit open, grabbing a wad of gauze shuffling towards Hanna, rolling the bread bag out of his way as he did. "May I?" he asked her, poised to place the gauze on her scrapes.

Hanna looked up at Mimi, who nodded and gestured for her to hand over her elbow. Hanna groaned and lifted her arm towards Harry, wincing.

Harry excitedly began to bandage Hanna's elbow, applying the gauze carefully. He then reached into the first aid kit and pulled out a roll of fabric and began wrapping up her arm, keeping it slightly bent so to not hurt it. Hanna peered down at Harry as he worked, her brows still furrowed but her pained expression had faded.

Mimi watched Harry, who was thoroughly enjoying himself. It seemed like he had been waiting for the day when he could use his first aid skills to fix someone.

Once done with the wrap, he turned back to the kit and pulled out a large square of fabric. He unfolded it and

smoothed it out on his lap, taking one corner to meet the opposite, creating a triangle.

“Hold out your arm for a second,” he instructed Hanna, who obliged. Harry scooped the fabric under Hanna’s elbow and tied two corners of the triangle together behind Hanna’s neck so that her elbow was now held in a sling.

“There!” he said proudly, examining his work. Hanna looked down at her arm, now neatly tucked into her chest and supported by the sling. The roll of fabric Harry had applied first tightly hugged her elbow, applying even pressure and providing some relief to the throbbing pain.

“Thank you, Harry,” Mimi said, noticing how Hanna seemed to be feeling much better now. Hanna nodded and mumbled her thank-you to Harry.

Mimi let out a giggle at her sister’s ridiculous objections to being helped. “You’re so stubborn, Hanna.”

Hanna scrunched her face up at her sister, mocking her, but then her lips curled into a slight smile. “Why do you have a first aid kit with you?” she asked Harry.

Harry shrugged, trying and failing to hide how proud he was to be able to help Hanna. “My dad and I go camping a lot and we like to practice bandaging each other up and stuff,” he replied. “My dad’s awesome. We do survival stuff in the woods on weekends.”

Hanna laughed and shook her head slightly. Mimi noted it looked like she was about to call Harry weird but stopped since his survival skills turned out to be really useful.

“Yeah, so that’s why I’m not scared of earthquakes,” Henry went on, but he didn’t look too sure of himself. It seemed like he was trying to convince himself.

Mimi nodded. “We should go home, Hanna. We need to find Mama and Papa.”

Hanna stood up in agreement, looking up and down the road. They had stopped in a small side street, and there weren’t too many people out on the road. It seemed odd to Mimi, since the first thing she wanted to do was run outside, away from all the old buildings in the city centre.

Harry shifted his weight nervously from one foot to the other. “Can I come?” he asked. “I don’t really know my way home. My dad always picks me up from school. He didn’t come this time and I was supposed to follow the map he gave me to get home but then the earthquake hit and I got lost.” Harry took a deep breath as he gasped for air after tripping over his words.

“He lives nearby us,” Mimi added, looking to her sister.

Hanna smiled and put her uninjured hand on Harry’s shoulder. “Sure,” she said. “When in trouble, we help one another—right?”

Harry smiled and nodded. He kneeled down to pack his things back up into his bag. He grabbed the deformed bread, holding it up towards Mimi. "Is this yours?"

Mimi nodded and took the bread bag.

Hanna looked around. "Alright," she said, beginning to walk down the street. "This way!"



Chapter 4

There was a nervous energy as the three children walked towards their neighbourhood. It was the first big earthquake the three of them had ever experienced, and the city looked much different than usual. Rocks and wood from buildings had fallen to the ground, making the walk much more difficult. Mimi, Harry, and Hanna stepped carefully between the rubble, making sure not to fall.

Residents had already begun the cleanup, and each street the trio walked through was filled with people pushing rubble out of the street, sweeping up glass from shattered storefront windows, and reinforcing buildings that had shifted or become unstable during the quake.

Hanna led the way with Mimi and Harry close behind. Mimi swung the bread bag as she walked, her concentration switching between the ground in front of her to all the action happening around her.

Harry followed the two sisters, slightly hanging back as he studied the map his father had given him. Mimi kept having to turn around and tell him to hurry up and not get left behind.

After a while, Hanna turned to Mimi and Harry. "We're almost at the footbridge!" she said.

Mimi sighed thankfully. The two girls lived just across the river, and once they walked across the bridge they would be nearly home. Mimi glanced ahead of her sister, seeing the river in the distance and the homes of her neighbourhood just across it. The footbridge was past the buildings at the end of the street, just out of sight.

"Woah!" Mimi suddenly heard from behind her, followed by a shuffling and a thump. She turned around to see Harry on the ground. He had tripped over a rock and landed on top of his map, his hands splayed out in front of him.

"Oops," he said, brushing himself off as he got up. "I wasn't looking."

He grinned impishly and picked his map up off the ground. Mimi paused to let him catch up. "Are you alright?" she asked. Harry responded by laughing and nodding.

"You should be more careful!" they heard Hanna yell from ten feet in front of them. Harry and Mimi turned to look at Hanna, who laughed before disappearing around the corner.

Harry and Mimi walked swiftly to catch up. Mimi burst around the corner, so excited to be almost home—and collided right into Hanna’s back. “Hanna what are you doing?!” she exclaimed, annoyed.

Hanna didn’t move or say anything, just stared ahead.

“Hanna?” Mimi asked again, concerned.

Mimi heard Harry gasp from beside her. “The bridge!”

Mimi peered around her sister. Where the footbridge was supposed to be was an empty expanse of the river. “Wh—where is it?” she exclaimed.

The three of them rushed towards where the entrance to the footbridge should be, joining a crowd of people that were gathered there, all sharing the children’s concern about the disappeared footbridge. The river rushed beneath them, and as they got closer, they could see that the riverbank had collapsed out from underneath the bridge.

“There,” Harry said. Mimi turned to see Harry pointing down-river to a pile of wooden planks that had washed ashore at the riverbend. Some of the wooden planks were still connected in the shape of the footbridge that linked their neighbourhood to the city centre.

The three children stood in silence, realizing they now had no way of getting home.

Mimi's eyes traced the riverbed, looking up and down to see if there was another spot to safely cross. She began to get more and more anxious, not knowing if there would be a way to get home. She had only ever walked home this way and didn't know any other way.

Behind her, Harry let out a *hmm*.

Mimi turned around to see him studying his map. "Here!" he said, dropping down to put the map flat on the ground, pointing to a section along the river. Mimi crouched down next him to see.

"We're right here," he said, pointing to another spot on the map with his other hand. Mimi traced the river along the map from one of Harry's fingers to the other. There was a road crossing the bridge a ways downriver.

"There's another bridge," Mimi said, looking up towards Hanna. Hanna stood above the map, peering down. "I think I know where that is," Hanna said. She looked from the map to the river. "We'll just have to follow the river down, I guess."

"It looks like there's a faster way!" Harry pointed to the map. "The river curves away from us," he said, his finger tracing it, "but then it curves back. If we follow the river, we'll take a lot longer getting home than if we cut through here—" Harry pointed to a road that seemed to run from one river curve to the other.

“Okay, then let’s do that,” Hanna nodded. “You lead the way.”

“Yes!” Harry exclaimed, grabbing the map and leaping to his feet. “Off we go!”

The trio took off down the street that ran alongside the river. They kept their distance from the edge of the river though, as they had seen how the bank had caved in and swept away the bridge—they didn’t want that to happen to them too. Harry took the lead, arms outstretched, holding the map like he was leading them to hidden treasure. Mimi and Hanna trailed behind, Hanna swinging her uninjured arm as she walked and Mimi still clutching the bag of deformed bread.

. . .

After a while of walking, the river began to curve to the left, away from the street. Harry paused a moment and studied his map.

Hanna peered over his shoulder. She pointed to the map. “We’re here,” she said.

Harry nodded. “And we go this way—” he pointed to their right “—then take a left and continue from there.”

Mimi strained to see the map, standing across from Harry and looking at it upside-down. She looked to where

Hanna had pointed. As the river went one way, the street they were on continued straight before ending in a dead end. She looked at the streets Harry had said they needed to walk down; the street directly to their right would lead them back downtown, near the market, but the street they needed to turn on ran down to meet the river where a bridge went across it.

Before Mimi could finish looking at the map, Harry briskly folded it up twice, so it was small enough to hold in one hand while still seeing their directions. He turned to his right and began to trek down the street.

Hanna and Mimi shared a look, Hanna smiling and rolling her eyes. *Boys*, Mimi thought, shaking her head and turning to follow Harry.

As they walked, Mimi looked up at the buildings around her. Most were made out of brick and concrete, with glass windows and wooden doors. The area of the city they were in was dusty and old, the road beneath them paved with hundreds of cobblestones placed together. Just like near the market, rubble had spilled into the street as the buildings shook in the earthquake, and they had to carefully step around broken glass.

They passed by kids and their parents sweeping up debris, clearing the street for cars and motorcycles like she

had seen earlier. People were already rebuilding some buildings, hammering away at wooden planks and reinforcements.

Harry turned left and led them down the next street. Mimi could see all the way to the end of the road, and in the distance, she saw a clearing. She realized it must be the river.

“Not too far now!” Harry sang out, excitedly looking back at the sisters.

They were in better spirits with each step, walking closer and closer to home.

“Harry,” Hanna said, “do you always carry around a first aid kit with you?”

Harry laughed. “Yup!” he said. “I’m always prepared for anything! It sure helped out today!” He gestured at Hanna’s arm.

Hanna stopped in her tracks and glared at Harry, raising her finger like she was about to scold him. He immediately began to apologize, but Hanna burst out in laughter. “I’m kidding!” She laughed. “It’s good you had it.”

The three of them looked at each other and laughed. They were lucky to have run into Harry, Mimi thought. As they walk, she hopped over a big piece of crumbled brick that lay in the street.

“You should teach us some survival skills someday,” Mimi said as they walked along.

Harry nodded. “Yup! Everyone should have them,” he said.

Mimi laughed. “Do you want to know how she hurt her arm?” she asked Harry, who eagerly nodded. “She tripped on a bunch of potatoes!”

Harry and Mimi burst out laughing, Mimi acting like she was slipping around as potatoes rolled around her feet. Harry doubled over, clutching his stomach in laughter. “Potatoes!” he exclaimed in disbelief.

“Hey! Mimi!” Hanna said, “I still have one good arm!” She raised her arm like she was winding up a punch and glared at her sister, teasing Mimi.

As the three of them laughed, the building next to them suddenly shuddered and groaned. The trio stopped laughing and turned to look at the building, each frozen in their tracks. A storefront was on the main level, and above it looked like an apartment. It was old, and the windows had been smashed in the earthquake, the sign of the store had fallen off one side and was now stretched across the front window, one side on the ground and the other still attached above the door. There were wooden planks along its front, placed there from people propping it up in an effort to support it after the earthquake.

“Did you hear that?” Harry asked.

The girls didn’t have time to reply, because the building groaned again.

“Is it... moving?” Hanna asked. Mimi squinted, trying to notice any movement.

“Kids! Run!” A voice yelled out from in front of them.

Mimi turned to see a woman a ways in front of them, gesturing frantically for them to come towards her. She looked up in fear at the building next to them.

Mimi realized it must have been moving forwards, and as she looked back towards the building, almost in slow motion, she saw the bricks in the wall getting bigger and bigger as it fell towards them.

Harry let out a scream and pushed Mimi forwards. She sprinted, with Hanna and Harry close behind her. She focused on the ground in front of her, hopping around fallen bricks, forcing herself not to look back so that she could run faster.

“Go!!” she heard Hanna scream from behind her.

As Mimi rushed towards the woman, still frantically ushering them towards her, she heard a clatter of bricks hitting the ground behind her. She could feel Hanna and Harry sprinting alongside her.

Suddenly there was a big *boom* as the building came crumbling to the ground behind them. A huge cloud of brown

dust engulfed the trio as they sprinted away from the collapsing building, unharmed.

Mimi inhaled a big breath of the dust as she ran, coughing and sputtering. She could barely breathe through the thick cloud, and her eyes started to water as the dust got in her eyes. She couldn't see anything through the dust cloud, and she stopped running, scared about tripping over rocks and glass.

Mimi doubled over, coughing and coughing. The dust scratched her throat and her eyes stung. She placed her hands on her knees and coughed until the air became a bit clearer and she pulled the collar of her shirt up to cover her mouth and nose.

Suddenly the thought of her sister and Harry came into her mind and she stood up, frantically calling out their names amidst her coughs.

"We're okay!" she heard Hanna call from somewhere through the dust.

Suddenly the woman who had saved them appeared from within the brown, dusty cloud. "Come here," she said to Mimi, taking her arm and leading her forward as Mimi continued to cough and cry.

Mimi struggled to open her eyes, the dust making her eyes sting. She fought the urge to rub them, knowing it would

only make it worse. She could feel the dust cloud settling and her breathing evened out as the dust went away.

She viciously blinked, forcing herself to open her eyes and look around her. Hanna and Harry were standing a couple feet ahead of her, both covered head to toe in brown dust. She looked down at herself, her favourite outfit now covered in a layer of thick brown dust just like her sister and Henry. She held out her arms, and realized she was missing something.

“The bread!” she cried, turning around to see where she had dropped it as she ran. Behind her was unrecognizable, the street completely covered in large chunks of concrete from the collapsed building. People stood around, staring at the destruction.

Hanna came up beside her and hugged her. “It’s okay! I think mama will forgive us.”

Mimi could feel hot, wet tears running down her face. She began to cry. “But we were supposed to pick up bread!”

Mimi let out a sob into her sister’s chest. She sniffled, then coughed, the dust still bothering her. She felt Hanna pat her head and took a deep breath.

“Wait!” she heard Harry say. The two sisters turned to look at Harry, who had walked back towards the rubble. He leaned down and lifted up a very dusty, extremely deformed bag of bread. “Found it!”

Mimi laughed and wiped her tears away as Harry walked back over and handed her the bread. He smiled, then turned to the lady who had saved them.

“Hey thanks, miss!” he said with a smile.

The woman was short and round, maybe a bit older than Mimi’s parents, and wearing an apron and holding an old dirty rag in her hand. The woman pinched Harry’s cheek and smiled. “Of course,” she said. Her gaze drifted to the collapsed building. “There goes my shop,” she said.

Mimi turned to look at the woman. “That was your shop?” Mimi felt sad for the woman, but the woman shook her head and assured Mimi it was alright.

“No worries, darling,” she said. “There was nobody inside, and that’s all that matters. Nobody was hurt—we just got a bit dusty!” The woman chuckled.

Mimi looked back towards the rubble in the street. Again, people had already begun clearing blocks of concrete out of the way so vehicles could get through.

“Where are your parents?” the woman asked the three of them. She looked concerned to see three preteens alone after a big earthquake.

“We’re on our way back home,” Hanna told her. “We live just across the river, but the footbridge up there has collapsed and we’re going to the other bridge now.”

The woman nodded. “Okay—but be careful. As you can see, some buildings still aren’t sturdy after all the shaking.”

The woman smiled stiffly to the trio and turned to face the destruction, her hands on her hips and her head shaking disappointedly. She let out a *tsk tsk* noise and walked towards where her shop once stood, yelling something and gesturing at the men clearing the street as if she were upset that they were misplacing her concrete—the rag she was holding flailing about in her hand as she did so.

She sniffled once more, and shook out her body, trying to shake the feeling of being scared and sad out of her. As she did so, a cloud of dust exploded off of her and Harry, who was standing next to her, coughed and backed away, waving a hand in front of his face in an attempt to get rid of the dust.

“Watch it, Mimi,” he said with a dramatic cough.

“Oh, shush,” Hanna told him, playfully ruffling his hair, again creating a cloud of dust.

Hanna dusted herself off with her uninjured arm. “We should get going,” she told the other two. After dusting as much of herself off as she could reach with just one hand, she stood up and turned to the woman, who was now fully shouting to a young man about him putting a piece of crumbled concrete too far away from where her store used to be. The man looked stunned and kept nodding his apology,

dragging the misplaced concrete over to the other side of the road.

“Thank you for saving us!” Hanna called out. The woman turned around and waved, quickly getting back to ordering another person to put a crumpled piece of shelf over near her collapsed storefront.

Mimi turned to look behind them, towards where they had been headed before they had to sprint away from the falling building. Not too far in the distance, she could see the street get wider and a row of buildings lining the riverbank. She faintly heard car horns in the distance and saw many people walking past the intersection where the bridge should be.

The trio started off once again, on their way to the second bridge. Harry held his map out in front of him, constantly checking their directions even though both Hanna and Mimi could clearly see exactly where they needed to go just ahead of them.

With each step, a little cloud of brown dust *poofed* off each of their bodies. Every now and then one of them let out a small cough and dusted off their clothes or their hair a bit more.

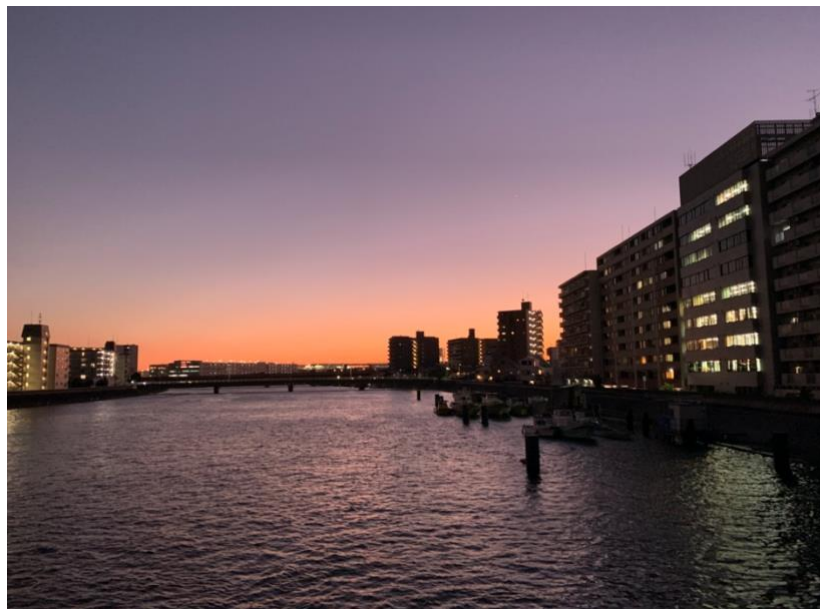
As they drew nearer to the bridge, the sound of cars honking grew louder and louder, and Mimi could see a lineup

of cars parked along the main road leading up to the bridge which was just out of sight. The three of them, still covered head to toe in dust, received from some strange looks from people as they hurried by.

The cars in the distance got bigger with each step closer, and soon the trio were at an intersection. Cars honked and honked but the traffic wasn't moving. People wandered around in chaos, some running, some clutching small children, some yelling out at each other and picking rubble up from the streets.

Mimi looked to her right, down the main road that extended deep into the city. In the distance, she could see smoke rising up from the fire at the market, but thankfully it looked like it had gotten smaller. It was just a small trickle of grey smoke rising slowly into the sky, compared to the thick black cloud that it was before.

As her eyes followed the lineup of cars back towards her, she looked to her left, to where the river was, and then she saw it: the bridge.



Chapter 5

The bridge was, thankfully, still standing. Mimi remembered driving over it in the car once or twice with her parents but had never walked home this way before. It was lucky Harry happened to have a map.

The bridge was two lanes wide, and on each side of the road there was a narrow sidewalk. Today, however, cars were parked in the middle of the street on each side as two policemen blocked off the bridge from car traffic—no wonder

there were so many cars backed up all the way down the road. Motorcycles honked their way through to speed across the bridge to the other side, darting between pedestrians who were rushing across. The car horns grew louder as more cars pulled into the traffic jam on both sides of the bridge, not realizing that police had blocked off the bridge. Slowly, people realized that they needed to get out of their vehicles and walk across instead.

Mimi wondered for a moment why the police weren't letting any cars through, then realized the bridge must have been damaged a bit in the earthquake and people were worried about it being unstable.

The trio stood and watched the chaos for a moment before stepping into the street and beginning to hurry across the bridge. They were almost home and Mimi was so excited to see her parents again. She knew they were probably really worried about her and Hanna.

"Maybe another two kilometres," Harry said from behind the map. Mimi nodded, but that meant nothing to her—she had no idea how big a kilometre was.

The three slipped between cars and joined the line of people walking across the bridge. They darted over to the sidewalk, avoiding motorcycles as they whizzed by. As they trudged along the bridge, Mimi ran her hand along the guard

rail, peering down into the water below her. The usually clear water was murky, and every so often a plank of wood or car tire floated by. More than just the footbridge must have collapsed into the river, she thought.

As a plank of wood drifted downstream, she followed it with her eyes, turning to look across the bridge as it slipped underneath. As she stared across motorcycles whizzing by and people darting across the bridge, she realized the sun was setting on the horizon.

“Hanna!” she called ahead to her sister. “The sun’s going down!”

Hanna turned to look at the sunset then turned back toward her sister. “We better hurry then,” she said. Their parents would be even more worried—they weren’t allowed to be out after dark.

Harry, in the lead, glanced back at the two of them. “Two kilometres!” he sang out.

Hanna and Mimi looked at each other, and Hanna made a quizzical look, shrugged, and mouthed *two kilometres?* Mimi laughed and shrugged her shoulders back, lifting up her arms and mouthing back at her sister: *no idea!*

The two giggled and followed Harry to the end of the bridge.

Harry jumped across the line that divided the smooth pavement of the bridge and the bumpy, worn-down street along the riverbank. The two sisters followed him, humming along and making up their own song. The trio made their way away from the river, walking deeper into the rows and rows of houses.

Harry held up his map, dramatically checking it every once and then to make sure he was going in the right direction. “We’re almost there!” he exclaimed.

“Two more kilometres?” Hanna asked playfully.

“Yep, just about!” Harry continued walking, excitedly, and Mimi laughed.

They followed Harry for a little longer, turning left and right as they went deeper into their neighbourhood. Mimi started to recognize some of the buildings. There was the house with the purple door—and the house with the ginormous rose bushes out front—and then the house with the upside-down “2” in its address number.

As they took a left turn after passing by a home with the whole family sat outside in a tent, Harry suddenly stopped, Mimi crashing into his back. Her nose smashed into the back of his head, and startled, she accidentally inhaled a breath of dust as it *poofed* off the two of them. She backed up, coughing, and lost her grip on the bread bag.

“Harry!” she exclaimed, annoyed at his abrupt stop. Mimi leaned down pick to back up the bread bag.

She pushed past him, continuing down the street, but he frantically put out his arm to stop her.

“Wait!” he shouted. Mimi was confused and annoyed, and looked to see what Harry was pointing at, his hand outstretched still holding the map.

About forty steps in front of them an electricity line had fallen to the ground. Mimi could hear the faint sizzle of electricity as it buzzed through the line with no place to go.

“So what?” she said, trying to push past Harry again.

“No!” he shouted, pulling Mimi back by her shoulders. “It’s dangerous!”

“What? We can just hop over it!” Mimi was getting increasingly annoyed with Harry. They were *almost* home and now he just had to cause a scene. “We walk under them all the time!”

“Mimi, no,” Hanna piped in. “The electricity is in the ground now.”

Mimi was confused.

Harry whirled around to face Mimi, looking her in the eye. “You’ll get electrocuted! *Don’t* go any closer,” he warned her.

Mimi, still annoyed, rolled her eyes. “I don’t get it, why can’t we just hop over it?”

Hanna came around to face her sister. She pointed towards the downed power line with her uninjured arm. “Electricity goes through the wire from place to place, but when it’s fallen down, electricity goes into the ground. If we get too close, the electricity will go into us and zap us, which can really, *really* hurt.”

Mimi squinted her eyes, trying to picture electricity running through the ground and zapping them. “But why can we stand here?”

“My dad says that we have to stay ten metres away from a broken power line,” Harry said. “If we’re any closer than that, the charge will be strong enough to hurt us! It’s sort of going into us right now too, just we can’t feel it ‘cause there’s not enough.”

Mimi digested this new information. “How far is ten metres?” she asked.

Harry pouted, contemplating. “Maybe twenty steps?” he said, taking a couple of steps forward and back as if measuring out a metre. He nodded to himself. “Yep, about twenty steps, maybe more just to be safe.”

Mimi looked around the street in the dim light, noticing that while there were people walking around, nobody was getting close to the power line.

“But then how do we get home?!” Mimi wailed, throwing her arms up in frustration.

Harry held out the map, studying the maze of streets that surrounded them. “Here!” he said, pointing to the map. “We can go this way, then loop back around through this street.”

Mimi followed his finger as he traced the map. The streets would bring them back around, where they could easily make their way to Harry’s house, marked by a hand-drawn “X” on the map.

Mimi groaned. “Can we hurry then? It’s getting darker,” she said nervously.

Hanna grabbed Mimi’s free hand with her uninjured hand. “We’ll be home soon!” she said. She leaned down to her sister’s ear and whispered just enough so Harry couldn’t hear, “About two kilometres.”

Mimi giggled, her mood lifted by her sister’s light teasing.

The trio began on their detour, Harry leading the way once again with his map and the sisters swinging their hands together alongside them.

. . .

After what seemed like forever, the three of them walking and cracking jokes, laughing with each other as they trod along, Harry slowed down and stopped as they approached an intersection. He examined the map, then looked up to the street sign he stood underneath.

“This is my street!” he said excitedly. Mimi looked around, examining the homes on the street. They looked just like the rest of the houses they had walked by, with their faded concrete walls and little gardens out front.

Harry turned to the left, skipping down the street. He had placed the map back in his bag, not needing it any longer as he knew his way home from here.

The girls followed along, having to quickly shuffle to keep up with Harry’s skipping. A couple minutes later, they came upon a small blue house with the numbers 652 hanging above the door. The windows were dark, as if no one was home. The girls stood outside as Harry ran up to the door, pulling his key out and rushing inside, flicking the lights on.

Mimi heard him yell from inside, “Mom! Dad! I’m home!”

Hanna and Mimi waited patiently on the sidewalk, not sure whether or not to continue on their way home. Suddenly, Harry appeared at the door, a nervous look on his face.

“My mom and dad aren’t home,” he told them. Mimi could hear the stress in Harry’s voice. It tremored as he said, “Well, I guess you guys can go home now.”

The sun had dipped well below the horizon, and the neighbourhood was almost fully dark. Stars were beginning to shine out in the darkness, and the moon had just appeared in the sky.

Mimi glanced up at her sister. Hanna’s face was full of concern, and as they made eye contact Mimi knew what to do. She darted up to Harry’s front door, Hanna following close behind. “I think you should come with us,” she told him. Harry shifted uncomfortably from foot to foot, the nervous look still on his face.

“It’s okay,” Hanna told him, leaning down to be eye level with Harry. “You shouldn’t be alone. Our house is close by—we can leave your parents a note! They can come find you.”

Harry looked relieved, nodding in agreement. “Okay,” he said. “I’ll get some paper.”

The girls stepped into Harry’s house as he disappeared inside to get a piece of paper.

When he returned, Hanna took the pencil and paper from him, scribbling down her and Mimi's address. "Phone number, too," Mimi told her, and Hanna nodded, writing down their phone number underneath.

Harry took the note from Hanna, and Mimi watched as he wrote above their address: *I'm at my friend's house. Love, Harry.* He took out a piece of tape and stuck the note to the wall across from the front door in a place where his parents couldn't miss it.

Once he was done, the girls nodded to each other, and Harry followed them out the door, locking it behind him. He sighed heavily, and the three of them hopped down the front steps and continued out to the street.

"Where do you think they could be?" he asked Hanna and Mimi sadly.

"Maybe they're at work?" Mimi reassured him. She looked over at Harry, whose face was turned down. He didn't look like the excited Harry who was leading them home with his nose in his map and his survival smarts keeping them safe. Instead, he looked sad and scared, worried about finding his parents. She frowned and looked down at the ground as they walked.

Hanna turned to look at Harry as she led their way home. "I bet you they got stuck in that traffic," she told him. "Do they drive a car?"

Harry nodded, looking at Hanna. He perked up a bit at the possibility they were just stuck in traffic.

"I bet they'll be home any minute," Mimi said.

Harry nodded. "Shouldn't I stay home though and wait for them?"

"I don't know," Hanna said. "I think it's better if you stay with us," she told him.

Mimi nodded in agreement, looking over to Harry as they walked. "At least this way you're not alone. I think being with friends is much better than being alone."

"Yeah, I guess you're right," Harry said. He didn't seem too convinced, but he also seemed happy to be with the girls instead of being alone at home at night.

The trio walked along in silence for a moment.

"You know..." Harry said slowly. He seemed anxious, and Mimi noticed it seemed like he wanted to tell them something.

"When the earthquake happened, I was all alone," he said, his voice strained. "I was really scared, and I didn't think I'd ever make it home after I got lost."

He looked up at Mimi, his eyes glistening. “But then I found saw you guys, and I pretended like I wasn’t scared. But I really was.”

Hanna slowed her pace, joining Harry and Mimi to walk next to them. She put her uninjured arm around Harry’s shoulders, and Mimi put one around his waist so that the three of them were all walking along arm-in-arm. They stuck their feet out in front of them, legs walking in synchronization, and they all giggled. Mimi felt herself warm up, filled with happiness from having her sister and Harry there to keep her company.

“We were scared too,” Hanna told him. “We’re glad you came along.”

“Yeah,” Mimi agreed. She looked at Harry from the corner of her eye and poked him playfully in the cheek. Harry perked up, smiling and shrugging Hanna and Mimi off of him. He stuck out his chest and walked proudly, swinging his elbows out as he marched.

Hanna and Mimi laughed.

“Scared? Me? Never!” Harry joked.

After a short while, Mimi, Hanna, and Harry turned the corner onto the girls’ street.

The sisters let out a relieved sigh at the sight of their home, still standing. They had worried it too had collapsed like

the market or the bridge, but there looked to be no damage at all, except for a tree that had fallen across the front path. A light was on in the kitchen, and they could see shadows moving about.

The three of them hurried towards the house, Hanna jogging ahead and leaping over the fallen tree, reaching the door first. Before she could put a hand on the door handle, the door swung open and there stood their mother, a bandage in one hand and a look of worry and relief on her face.

“Oh, my girls!” their mother cried out, clutching Hanna in a big bear hug and pulling Mimi in to join. She pulled away from them, a tear escaping from one eye, and leaned down so that her face was even with theirs. She planted what seemed like a hundred kisses all over their faces, and then stepped back to look at them.

“Why are you all covered in dust?” she asked, but before they could answer, she gasped at seeing Hanna’s injured arm. “My dear! What happened—are you alright?”

Hanna nodded, and her mother placed a hand on her cheek. “I hurt my elbow trying to run out of the market,” Hanna said. She had a big smile on her face, despite her elbow pain.

“Oh, sweetheart,” their mother said, pulling Hanna and Mimi back into a hug. “I was so worried!”

Mimi hugged her mother back tightly, so thankful she was finally home. She held back tears, trying to be brave in front of her mother to show her it was all okay.

The girls' mother placed a big kiss on top of each of their heads, ignoring the brown dust that still slightly remained. She pulled back once again to look at her daughters and let out a laugh.

"Mimi! You still brought home the bread!" she laughed as she took the bread from Mimi. Mimi nodded and watched her mother pull the bread out of the bag. It was dusty and squished and looked nothing like a loaf of bread anymore. Mimi frowned, and her mother laughed, enveloping her in a big hug.

"Thank you, darling," she said.

The girls' mother looked over their heads to see Harry, standing quietly a couple of feet away. She let go of her daughters, walking over to Harry. "Are you Harry?" she asked him. He looked up at her, shocked.

"How do you know my name?" he gave her a bewildered look.

"I think I have something you'll want to see," she told him, placing a hand, still holding the bandage, on his shoulder and guiding him into the house.

Mimi and Hanna looked at each other, confused, as their mother led Harry into their house. They followed them inside, Hanna closing the door behind them, and Mimi walked into their kitchen.

“Mama!” she heard Harry shriek, running over to a woman who sat on at the girls’ kitchen table, a bandage wrapped tightly around the top of her head.

As Mimi walked into the kitchen, she looked around. Glasses and plates had been shattered all across the floor from falling out of cupboards during the earthquake. A broom lay propped up in one corner, with a pile of glass shards underneath it, half swept up. In the other, seated at the kitchen table, was a woman—Harry’s mother—and a man, who Harry leapt towards in a big hug. Mimi realized it was Harry’s parents that sat at her kitchen table. She almost couldn’t believe it—they had found his parents after all! And at her own house, of all places.

Mimi and Hanna’s mother took the bandage she held in her hand and continued wrapping up Harry’s mother’s head. It looked like she had a cut just above her left eye, and Mimi’s mother was bandaging her up.

As Mimi got closer, she saw that Harry’s mother was tightly gripping a small photo of him. Mimi realized her mother must have recognized Harry from his class picture.

“Why weren’t you guys at home?” Harry asked his parents.

“Well, we had to come straight here,” his dad explained. “During the shaking, your mother got injured and we knew that Gina—” he gestured to Hanna and Mimi’s mother—“was a nurse.”

Harry nodded, and hugged his dad. “I fixed Hanna’s arm, look—” Harry pointed to Hanna’s injured arm, the sling still holding it in place.

His dad looked at Harry, proud. “Way to be!”

Mimi smiled shyly, “Harry helped us get home, too,” she told Harry’s father.

Harry’s parents smiled and looked proudly at their son. His dad pat his back, applauding Harry for remembering all his survival skills they had worked on together.

“Very well done!” Hanna and Mimi’s mother told Harry, shooting a glance at Hanna’s sling. “Almost looks professional.” She winked at Harry, who smiled back.

Mimi looked around the kitchen. “Where’s papa?” she asked, a bit worried.

Mimi’s mother glanced towards the clock they kept hung on the wall, but it had fallen and the glass had shattered. It now lay in a mess on the floor. The seconds hand was stuck still, and the time read 3:42—the time of the earthquake.

Just as their mother was about to tell Hanna and Mimi to go check the time in the other room, everyone heard the door open.

“Hello?” a voice called out from the front of the house.

“Papa!” Hanna and Mimi shrieked, running to greet their father at the door. He kneeled down and pulled them up into a big hug. Their mother followed, and the family squeezed each other tight. Their father planted a big kiss on each of their cheeks, and they hugged for a moment longer.

“I’m so glad you’re all safe,” Papa said. “I was stuck and couldn’t get over the bridge to get home—I had to walk.”

“Us too!” Hanna and Mimi told him. They must have just missed each other, Mimi thought.

They retreated back into the house, and Mimi’s father greeted Harry and his parents.

After some short conversation, their father spoke up. “I heard people saying they’re handing out free emergency supplies at the church down the road,” he said. “We should go get some—the stores might be closed for a while.”

Harry’s dad nodded in agreement, and the two volunteered to go gather supplies.

“We need some for at least seventy-two hours,” Harry piped in. He turned to his father. “We have some at home, right dad?”

His dad nodded. With all their survival training, they must be prepared for this, Mimi thought.

A plan was then created, all the adults and kids sitting around Hanna and Mimi's kitchen table. Harry and his dad volunteered to teach some survival skills to Mimi's family, and Mimi's mother volunteered to keep everyone healthy since she was a nurse and kept some medical supplies at home.

As the adults each got up to get everything prepared, Hanna, Mimi, and Harry sat at the table. Mimi leaned over and laid her head on Hanna's shoulder, still covered in dust, and sighed. They all looked at each other, all tired from the adventure of a day they had just had. While it was scary at times, Mimi was glad that they'd had each other.

She smiled across the table at Harry, who smiled back.

Silently, she lifted up her hand, palm up towards Harry. He laughed, and leaned forward to return her high-five.

From behind her, Mimi heard her mother's voice calling them to come help clean up the kitchen. The three kids groaned, slowly getting up from the table. As they did, each showered down a layer of dust to the ground, and their mother gasped.

"I've changed my mind," she told the trio, broom handle in one hand and the other placed sassily on her hip. "Go clean yourselves up before you make the kitchen a mess."

Mimi looked from her mother to the kitchen covered in broken plates and glasses. She looked at Hanna and Harry, who each had a bewildered look on their face. *They* were making the kitchen a mess?

After a pause, the three of them each burst out laughing. Their mother laughed along and pretended to sweep them out of the kitchen with the broom. “And use the hose in the backyard—don’t mess up the bathroom too!” she shouted at them, teasing.

The trio laughed, disappearing from the kitchen on their way to get clean. Mimi was thankful the day was over. She had never thought she would feel an earthquake, but luckily, she’d had Hanna and Harry there by her side to keep each other safe. There was lots of rebuilding and cleaning to do, but at least she was back home, her family all safe and sound, ready to deal with whatever else came their way next.



Chapter 6

“What happened next, grandma?”

Grandma Amina shook her head slightly, coming back out of her daydream. There she sat, her two little grandkids snuggled up next to her on each side, eagerly looking up at her waiting for her to finish her story. Her son, Kira and Bo’s father, sat in an armchair next to his wife, who was sipping tea as the family listened to Grandma Amina’s story.

“Well,” she said. “My papa and Harry’s father went to get supplies, and we all stayed in our house for a bit. School was cancelled, so we focused on helping Mama and Papa clean up around the house and helping out anyone in the neighbourhood who needed help.”

“Wow!” Bo said excitedly.

“And since Mama was a nurse,” Grandma Amina continued, “lots of people from the neighbourhood came to our house for help with their injuries.”

“Did you and Harry become best friends after that?” Kira asked her grandmother.

Grandma Amina nodded, looking down at her granddaughter. “Yes, he taught Hanna and I lots of skills—how to read a map, how to start a fire, how to bandage an arm, and more! He grew up to be a firefighter and saved lots of people.”

“Wow,” Kira said. “Harry sounds really cool.”

Grandma Amina laughed and nodded. “Yes! He was. And guess what?”

“What!” Bo exclaimed excitedly.

“You’re related to him!” Grandma Amina laughed.

“Harry is Grandpa!”

Kira and Bo looked at each other, then looked over at their dad, who was sat across the room from them on an armchair. “Harry was your dad?” Bo asked his father.

The children’s parents and Grandma Amina all laughed, nodding.

Kira and Bo had a bewildered look on their face.

“Grandpa was *so* cool!” they shouted.

“Yep,” their dad said. “When I was a kid, we were always well-prepared for every emergency. He taught us lots of survival skills when we were kids. We even made our very own survival kits.”

“Dad, can we make a survival kit?” Bo and Kira asked excitedly.

Their father laughed and nodded. “Sure thing,” he said.

Bo and Kira hopped off the couch, planting a kiss on each of Grandma Amina’s cheeks as they did so.

Their father stood up from his chair, smiling at Grandma Amina. He turned his attention to Bo and Kira, who were jumping excitedly up and down at the thought of making their very own emergency survival kits.

“So,” their father clapped his hands together, rubbing them together in anticipation. “What should we put in it first?”



Mimi and the Big One

By Meghan Flood